

The Denmark Regional Series: Bornholm

Class Handout: Intermediate

23 April 2021

Bornholm is an eastern island in Denmark as well as a county. The island is only 227 square miles. In 1655, it is believed the population was only 10,000 people. The population grew until the middle of the twentieth century when it almost hit 50,000. Since, then the population has decline to about 40,000. Also included in Bornholm county is the small archipelago Ertholmene. Only about 84 people permanently live on these islands and the records discussed in this class apply to them as well.

History

Bornholm is believed to have originally been a petty kingdom with its own king. It was originally called Burgundaholmr and the Burgundians who settled Burgundy, France are thought to have originated from Bornholm. It became part of Denmark when Harald Bluetooth unified the country ca. 960. During Medieval times, Bornholm was split between the king and the archbishop, but the nobility never owned land here.

Both Denmark and Sweden interfered in the 30 Years War (1618-1648). Although both were on the same side, Sweden was much more successful. At the end of the war, Sweden saw the opportunity to win land from Denmark. In 1645 they won the islands of Gotland and Øsel from Denmark and Jämtland from Sweden. This made Sweden they main power in the Baltic and Denmark looked for revenge. In 1657, the Swedish king Charles X was at war in Poland and the Danish king Frederik III saw took the opportunity to attack Sweden, hoping to win back their lost land. The Swedes withdrew from Poland and marched into Jutland. The winter of 1657-1658 was so cold that the Swedish army walked across the ocean and made it to Copenhagen. Denmark surrendered and the Treaty of Roskilde ceded everything east of the Øresund to Sweden, including Bornholm on 8 March 1658 as well as Jämtland and Trøndelag in Norway. Charles X appointed Johan Printzensköld to be the new governor of Bornholm.

Just a few months later in August 1658, Charles X decided to wipe Denmark off the map. He attacked Copenhagen and a 22 month siege began. During the war, the Bornholmers revolted and murdered Printzensköld on 8 December 1658. They then presented the island to Frederik III as a gift on the condition that Bornholm would never again be separated from Denmark. Frederik fought for the Bornholmers in the ensuing peace treaty and Bornholm and Trøndelag were both returned to Denmark and Norway. The boundaries between Denmark and Sweden have not changed since then and the king has ruled Bornholm directly ever since.

The Land System in Bornholm

In most of Denmark, most of the land was owned by either the nobility or the king and the peasants leased the land from them. There were some freeholders who owned their land outright, but these made up less than 3% of the population. On Bornholm, there was no noble held land, 72% of the farms were freehold, 21% were leasehold and the rest were miscellaneous, often owned by the church or a proprietor. The Bornholmers paid half taxes and were exempt from the military and navy levying rolls until 1862.

In 1616, the freehold farms were each assigned a special number within the parish and in 1671, the leasehold farms were assigned a special number as well. The less than 7% that made up the miscellaneous farms were never numbered. The king sold most of the leasehold farms in 1744 and the purchasers became freeholders, but even after this, the old numbering system was preserved. This numbering system appears in many records such as the parish records and can be used to figure out what family lived on a farm at any given time.

Records

Copyhold Deeds

Fæsteprotokoller (copyhold deeds) are available 1689-1782. These record the names of those who leased land from the crown, their birthplace, the previous tenant, and the relationship between the new and old tenant if any. Only those who leased land from the king will be in these records. Again that was about 21% of the whole population. To view these records, search the FamilySearch catalog for "Denmark, Bornholm" click on "Land and Property" and then click on "Fæsteprotokoller, 1689-1782."

Land Records

Jordebøger (land registration lists) are available for most years 1658-1799. These list the farm (including its special number), the head of household, and the dues they were required to pay. The records up until 1689 have been transcribed on two websites: <http://www.bornholm-stamtavle.dk/indexen.html> and <https://www.bslf.dk/da/>. The others can be browsed at FamilySearch.org. Search the catalog for "Denmark, Bornholm," click on "Taxation," and then click on the database called "Jordebogsregnskaber 1659-1799"

Church Records

Overall, Bornholm has good church records. About 2/3rds of the island has parish records by the year 1690. The cities of Rønne and Åker have records starting in 1646. All pre-1814 records have been indexed at <https://www.kirkebog.dk/>.

Levyng Rolls

Bornholm was exempt from both the *lægdsruller* (military levyng rolls) and the *søruller* (navy rolls) until 1862. You will not find these records prior to that point.

Probate Records

Normally in Denmark, you need to figure out which *Gods* (estate) your ancestor leased their land from and look in that records of that *Gods* for a probate. For Bornholm, most of the records are available in one of two collections depending on if it was before or after 1761. From 1681 until 1761 most probates were recorded in a special collection Landdistrikternes Skifteskriver. To find this collection in the FamilySearch catalog search for "Denmark, Bornholm" click on "Probate Records" and then click on "Landdistrikternes skifteskriver, 1681-1761." After 1761, probates were recorded by the herred. Search for "Denmark, Bornholm, [the name of the herred]" and click "Probate Records".

There are some exceptions:

- 1685-1787: See *Hammershus Birk* for the city of Allinge-Sandvig. See also Skifteprotokoller, 1700-1919, which includes probates of Hasle Byret, Allinge-Sandvig Byret, Nørre Herred (Herredsret), and Hammershus Birk.

- 1747-1898: Åkirkeby City see *Skifteprotokoller, 1747-1898* under Åkirkeby Byret for those years

Additionally, all Bornholm probates have been indexed at <http://www.skifteuddrag-bornholm.dk/> and can be freely searched at that website.

Key Websites

Bornholms Slægts- og Lokalhistoriske Forening

Much research on Bornholm has already been done and can be freely accessed by those who know where to look. The first is *Bornholms Slægts- og Lokalhistoriske Forening* (Bornholm's Family and Local History Organization) <https://www.bslf.dk/da/>. They have the following databases available.

- Transcribed tax lists 1658-1689
- Research on the Wibe family
- Swedes on Bornholm 1840-1955
- Parish histories
- 3 Små Databaser
- Bornholmer i det Øverige Land 1845
- Jul På Bornholm

To access the first three, click on "Data" then "Download" and then "Jeg Bekræfter." You may then click on database you want. For the parish histories click "Data" then click "Herreder og Sogne." For the other databases, click "Data" then "Søgbare Data" and then choose the database you want. "3 Små Databaser" is a collection of Bornholmers in the Swedish death book 1946-2006, civil registration in the US 1917-1918, and civil registration in the US 1942. "Bornholmer i det Øverige Land 1845" is a database of people born on Bornholm, but living elsewhere in Denmark on the 1845 census. "Jul På Bornholm" is a database of deaths in Bornholm up until 2018.

Although this website has an English version, you will need to use the Danish version to access any of these materials.

Bornholmer.dk

This website has a large database of 113,646 Bornholmers from the end of the 1700's until the middle of the 1900's. Search for your ancestor or one of their vital dates in the search bar on the main page.

<http://bornholmere.dk/>

Skifteuddrag-Bornholm

At this website you will find all of the probates for Bornholm prior to 1845 typed and searchable using ctrl+F. There is also a collection of civil death certificates 1865-1882. Some of the files are quite large and will need to be downloaded as a zip folder to your computer.

<http://www.skifteuddrag-bornholm.dk/>

Bornholm Stamtavle

This website has a database of 62,808 Bornholmers. The author is particularly interested in the Jochumsen, Blem, Brandt, Schou, and Kofod families and special information about them is provided. He also has transcribed land registration lists 1658-1689, a list of each farm in each parish and their numbers, a Maps showing the locations of each of the farms. The DNA double helix is the menu and you can click on what you want. You can also contact the creator through the website if you have any questions or additions for his research.

<http://www.bornholm-stamtavle.dk/>